

LET'S GO TO THE FAIR



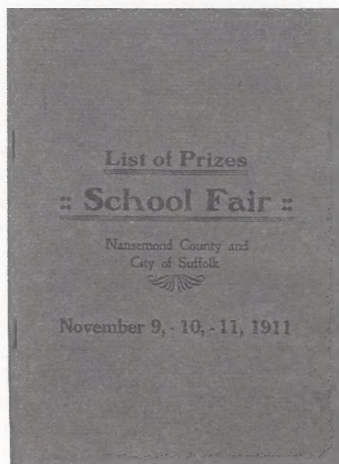
Believed to be the Box Elder School Exhibit for a School Fair

School Fairs

The world was so astoundingly different 100 years ago. Farm families in Nansemond County faced hard work year round. Leisure time was scarce and entertainment simple and rare. Perhaps the first type of fair to be enjoyed locally was the School Fair.

Nansemond County and Suffolk had a school fair in 1911 and, we suspect, several years before that. The fairs encouraged and rewarded performing a useful task very well. Among the many categories were: the Best Apron, the Best Pound Cake, Best Yield for 1 Acre of Cotton (by October 20), Best Yield of Soya Beans, Best Glass of Apply Jelly, Best Machine Made Shirt Waist, Best Reed Basket, Best Doll House, Best Relief Map of North America, a Spelling Bee and many others. There was also a prize to the school with the best exhibit.

Prizes were given by local businesses and ranged from cash (starting at \$1.00) to a box of candy, a bunch of bananas and other gifts, to a saddle, or, the biggest prize, a \$50.00 buggy. This was a social event but it encouraged excellence as well.



Booklet cover thanks to Christina Gray

W. H. CROCKER, President

H. C. HOLMAN
Secretary-Manager
Phone 377
140 Pine Street

Dr. R. Henry Bland
Treasurer

Tidewater Fair Association, Inc.

Suffolk, Va.



Undated letterhead

The Tidewater Fair

State and county fairs were very popular in the early twentieth century. The fair was a place to learn about new methods, especially in farming and home management, show off the best of one's labors, to socialize and be entertained.

In the days of segregation white fairs might have a "Negro exhibit" but these fairs were generally for whites. Booker T. Washington was a pioneer of the black county fair. The Suffolk Fair was an idea born in an older black organization, the Nansemond County Farmers Conference.

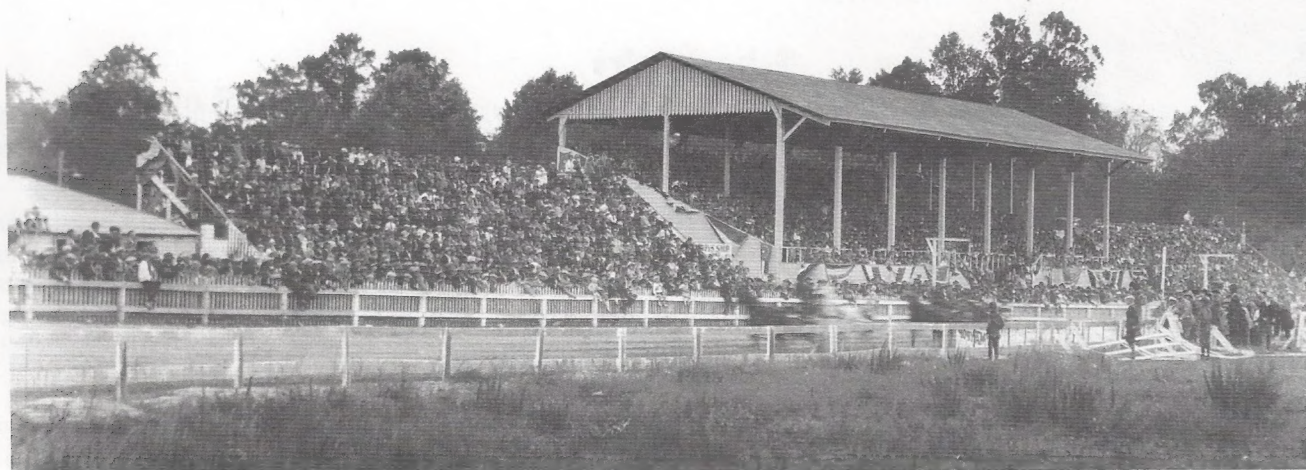
The Tidewater Fair Association was formed by and for the black community in 1910 though four years would pass before the first fair was held. The City of Suffolk appropriated money for the fair as early as 1915.

This fair was soon considered the most successful black fair. The Tidewater Agricultural Fair also known as the Suffolk Fair by 1922 was advertised as "The Colored State and Premier Fair of the State of Virginia." Nineteen other counties held similar fairs but Suffolk's drew the largest numbers. The success was due, in large part, to Suffolk's location in the midst of a large agricultural region in Southeastern Virginia and Northeastern North Carolina.

It was built on a 23-acre site on the Norfolk Road (now E. Washington Street) near the underpass. The fair offered talks on improved farming methods and talks to farm wives about how to help their husbands. Ministers, educators and politicians spoke on a variety of topics. Exhibits entered by men and women and boys and girls might win a gold medal or a blue ribbon for baked goods, canned goods, ladies' handwork, basket making, upholstery, woodwork and more. Prizes could be won by those who grew the best corn or the biggest pumpkin.

Big bands played and there was a dance floor. Fireworks, daredevil acts and hoochie-coochie shows were among the many entertainments. Perhaps the most important of these entertainments were the races—horses, mules and goats, but especially horse racing. These races took place in front of a 1000-seat grandstand. The Norfolk Journal and Guide said, "the track is one of the best in the state and many a gelding has established a record there."

This popular fair continued until 1979 when other entertainments (including Suffolk's Peanut Fest) were more readily available. Some of the earliest stockholders and officers were D.W. Lee, Willie Colden, James E. White and W.H. Crocker. Others were E.L.H. Rance, W.H. Land, L.L. Reid, W.T. Crocker, T.L.G. Walden, Obadiah Walden, Junie White and George Roper. *Information from Readings in Black and White: Lower Tidewater Virginia, published by Portsmouth Public Library, and Suffolk Journal Vol. 1, by Carol McGuire.*



This appears to be the grandstand on the letterhead above but we're not sure. The racetrack was important at both the Tidewater Fair and the Four County Fair.

The Four County Fair Ass'n, Inc.

Nansemond - Isle of Wight - Southampton [Va.] - Gates [N. C.]

OCT. 25-26-27-28
FIRST ANNUAL FAIR

Suffolk, Va.

October 7, 1921.

Member of:
 Va. Ass'n of Fairs,
 National Trotting Ass'n.

Officers

G. G. Coulbourne; Pres.
 R. B. Hill; Treas.
 N. G. Norfleet; Vice-Pres.
 Lem P. Jordan; Sec'y

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 Lyman R. Brothers
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 Frank Cross

Four County Fair

This Fair had many of the same aims and attractions as the older Tidewater Fair. The venues were not far apart. The Four County Fair was on sixty acres of land off White Marsh Road. *It was held for and by the white community.*

The first fair was held in 1921. Perhaps it was, in part, an attempt to bring more people to Suffolk to shop. In 1921 a number of Suffolk merchants and professional people bought tickets to be distributed throughout the four counties along with a brochure listing those businessmen who so generously made the day at the fair possible—gratis. Merchants' ads in the newspaper were geared to fair goers.

Like the Tidewater Fair, the Four County Fair lasted a week and offered a vast array of entertainments and exhibits. One of the most unusual events is advertised below. One difference, perhaps, was the jousting tournament with crowning of the queen, a popular old south entertainment that, as far as we know, only took place at the Four County Fair, not the Tidewater Fair.

The Four County Fair fell victim to the Depression. 1932 was its last year.

PINNER & ALBERTS
 JOBBERS OF
FIREWORKS
 SUFFOLK, VIRGINIA

Fireworks were part of both fairs. Undated letterhead

Can anyone name this couple?

LOOK! LOOK!

PROMINENT LOCAL COUPLE
Big Public
Wedding

Legal Ceremony
 AT THE NEW FOUR-COUNTY FAIR
 Wednesday Night, Sept. 23rd
 BE SURE TO BE THERE

Compliments of
H. I. Jaffe Furniture Store
 Best Wishes to the Lucky Bride and Groom
 Suffolk's Largest and Finest Furniture Store

Dr. Peanut

Dr. George Washington Carver, whose research revolutionized the world of peanuts, visited Suffolk twice according to a special mid-century edition of the Suffolk News-Herald. He came for the first Four County Fair in 1921 and the first Peanut Festival in 1940. During one visit the local Negro Business League presented him with a set of dishes—1 large and 4 small—made to look like peanuts.

WONDERFUL
PROGRAM
FOR 1932

OLD VIRGINIA
TOURNAMENT
TUESDAY

DUTTON'S
CIRCUS
 -- 14 --
AMAZING
ACTS

TWICE
DAILY

MARKS'
SHOWS
ON THE
MIDWAY

SMITH'S
BAND

FIREWORKS

A. A. A.
AUTO
RACES
SATURDAY

3---DAYS---3
HARNESS
RACES

A BIG
FAIR

Letterhead from The Four County Fair Ass'n, Inc.

Attractions from The 1932 Four County Fair Ass'n. letterhead

"THE HUB" Extends a Cordial Invitation to Everyone

TO MAKE THIS STORE THEIR HEADQUARTERS DURING THE FAIR. WE ARE NOW READY WITH A \$75,000.00 STOCK OF HIGH GRADE MERCHANDISE FOR EVERY MEMBER OF THE FAMILY, WHICH WAS BOUGHT BELOW THE PRESENT MARKET PRICES AND IN ORDER TO MAKE THIS WEEK A BIG SUCCESS WE ARE GOING TO OFFER EXTRA ORDINARY LOW PRICES DURING

Ladies Flannelette Gowns
EXTRA HEAVY WEIGHT FLANNEL
WITH EMBROIDERED YOKES
FULL CUT. ASST. PATT.
\$1.50 VAL. FAIR SPEC.--- **98c**

Men's Flannelette Shirts.
MADE OF EXTRA HEAVY WEIGHT
FLANNEL IN TAN ONLY,
SIZES 14½ to 17. \$1.50 Val.
EXTRA FAIR SPECIAL.--- **98c**



Horse and Mule Business

In 1939 Fermer Perry of Nansemond County and Sidney Hofler of Gates County built a new building on the Carolina Road to house their horse and mule business. Both men were farmers and lumbermen. The animals they sold were for working in the fields and the logwoods.

Over the next two decades or so, horseflesh was replaced by machines. The two businessmen gradually became interested in race horses—pacers and trotters—the kind that raced at the two Suffolk fairs.

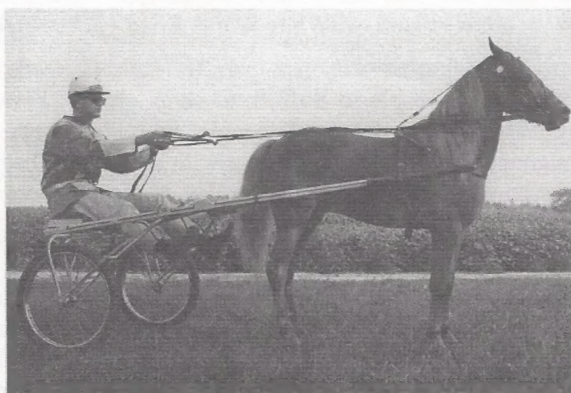
Fermer Perry was later the principal syndicator of *Nansemond*, winner of the famed Little Brown Jug in 1971. This race takes place in Delaware, Ohio, and is the second leg of the triple crown of harness racing for pacers.

The building that Perry & Hofler constructed for their business was bought in the 1960's by Buddy and Jimmy Darden for their Darden Cage Farm. It has been demolished in recent years.

PERRY & HOFLER
RETAIL DEALERS IN
HORSES AND MULES
SUFFOLK, VA.



From the Perry & Hofler envelope



Driver and sulky as they might have appeared at the Fair

For many years Suffolk was the main market for horses and mules for Gates, Chowan, Perquimans and Pasquotank Counties in North Carolina and Nansemond, Isle of Wight, Southampton, Surry and Sussex Counties in Virginia.

Some dealers in Suffolk through the 20th century were N.G. Norfleet, J.T. Parker, Wilson Norfleet, and Ray and Job Saunders. A. Rubin Benthall of Northampton County, North Carolina, is believed to have owned Benthall's Stockyards in Suffolk where both Saunders worked. Ray Saunders also raced the sulky from 1912 to 1925. Dick Woodward was in the horse and mule business and judged horse shows all over the state in the 1920s and '30s. Information from Bruce Saunders, Alvis Winslow and 1942 special edition of *Suffolk News-Herald*.



Exhibit buildings at the Four County Fair c. 1924

All Next Week = A Week Of Joy **THE GREAT FOUR COUNTY FAIR** **Suffolk, October 23, 24, 25, 26, 27**

COME EVERYBODY—BRING THE WHOLE FAMILY

A Pageant of Prosperity---An Exposition of Wonders

5 DAYS AND 5 NIGHTS

Horse Pony and Auto Racing

FIREWORKS EVERY NIGHT

Championship Old Va. Tournament 11 a. m. Opening Day

WORLD AT HOME SHOWS 31 CARLOADS OF AMUSEMENTS IRENE DARE DRIVING AN AUTO ON A STRAIGHT VERTICAL WALL. Lucille Anderson's Water Circus 6 HIGH DIVING BATHING BEAUTIES HOUSE OF 1000 WONDERS THE LAUGHING GALLERY ORIGINAL OVER THE FALLS KING KARLOS—EGYPTIAN "IT" HAWAIIAN VILLAGE ORIGINAL DIXIE MINSTRELS STELLA FROM THE JUNGLE PHAROAH OF KING TUT	GREAT 10 IN 1 SIDE SHOW 2—TWO BRASS BANDS—2 6—RIDING DEVICES—6 5—DAYS RACING :—5 FAST, EXCITING HORSE RACING FIRST FOUR DAYS— 3—RACES DAILY—3 100 RACE ENTRIES FROM 4 STATES FOR \$4000. IN PURSES AUTO RACES, SAT. OCT. 27 7 ENTRIES OF LEADING PLOTS OF THE SOUTH FOR DIRT TRACK CHAMPIONSHIP AND \$1000. CASH PURSES. DON'T MISS AUTO RACES	FREE ATTRACTIONS EVERY DAY—EVERY NIGHT WINIFRED GILRAINE DANCING SEXTETTE ALEX. MELFORD CLOWNS & EQUILIBRISTS HIRAM AND LUCINDY ORIGINAL RUBES INTERNATIONAL NINE ARABIAN ACROBATS THE DARING CROMWELLS MONTAGNA'S MILIT. BAND SUFFOLK COMMUNITY BAND	SPLENDID EXHIBITS OF THE RICH RESOURCES OF THE TIDEWATER AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT CATTLE, HORSES, MULES, SWINE, SHEEP, POULTRY FARM MACHINERY OF EVERY KIND PANTRY SUPPLIES AND DOMESTIC MANUFACTURE —: HENRY FORD DAY :— Saturday, October 27th 10 HANDSOME AND VALUABLE PRIZES FOR FORD CARS GIVEN BY ELLIOTT MOTOR CO. GRAND FORD STREET PARADE AT 11:00 A. M. FOR ALL ENTRANTS. JUDGING AND PARADE IN FRONT GRAND STAND—ASK FOR INFORMATION.
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:: The Holiday Event Of Tidewater ::

Postscripts to our Pause That Refreshes issue (June 2008)

Tip from a 3rd generation Coca-Cola man:

Pour water in glass, pour out, pour Coke in glass. Then add ice. This will keep the drink bubbly. Thanks to Forrest Cathey.



Inside Village Drug in Chuckatuck



Scenes from Mayo's Confectionery, clockwise from top left: Clarke & Grace Wiseman at the counter (can anyone identify the brand of soft drink displayed here?); John Baggett & Robert Speight dressed for the 1958 Festival celebration; Margaret Speight Woyer behind the counter; and Robert Speight filling the Coca-Cola machine. Pictures thanks to Lynette White.

Mailbag—

7-UP Bottling Company

From Fred Austin: Another company that bottled soft drinks in Suffolk was 7-UP. My brother-in-law, Junius Britt, worked for them from March 1947 until 1974. This is what he remembers:

7-UP bought Sunny Brook Beverage to get Sunny Brook's sugar quota. He thinks it may be about a year earlier than 1945. Joe Dorsey was manager and Percy Bridger was a salesman/driver when Junius went to work there. 7-UP bottled in the old Sunny Brook building at Holiday and Newport Streets until around 1948 or 1949 when they stopped bottling in Suffolk and got their drinks from Norfolk. At that time they moved to the 422 E. Pinner St. building that Nehi had been in. Nehi moved to Hall Ave. Mr. Dorsey moved to another location and Percy and Junius remained to run the warehouse and work as salesmen/drivers.

Hats Off!

- To **Tony Smith and the Robinson Development Group** for using names from Suffolk history for their condominiums at Prentis Place: Constant, Dawson, Granbery, Kilby, Prentis and Riddick.
- To **First Baptist Church, Mahan Street**, for exterior renovations on the Colden House (constructed 1912) at the corner of Main and Mahan Streets.
- To SNHS member **Carl Farris** who is renovating the old Norfleet House, 506 N. Main Street, as an office for himself, with rental space on the 2nd and 3rd floors.

Seeking information on Ellis of Nansemond County:

1739 Benjamin Ellis m. Comfort Baker
1769 Alfred Ellis
1802 (about) Alfred Ellis -
1st wife Nancy, 2nd wife Lavinia Parker
1831 Robert Calvin Ellis

If you have any information, please respond to:

Joy H. Steele
jhs55@carolina.rr.com

Congratulations to SNHS member and City Councilman **Joe Barlow** who is currently serving as Secretary General of the Jamestown Society, an international organization of people who descend from the earliest Jamestown settlers.

The Other Fairgrounds

The Fairgrounds Project has been discussed for years and now work has started in the 300 block of East Washington Street. But why that name if the Fair was actually held elsewhere?

Susie Bennett of the Fairgrounds Task Force offers two suggestions. One thought is that the Tidewater Fair might have been held at this smaller site before the 23-acre site was bought. Another idea is that many of the biggest Tidewater Fair supporters had businesses in the 300 block of East Washington Street.

THANKS TO OUR 2008 CORPORATE MEMBERS

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Community Banking Since 1919
www.farmersbankva.com~757-242-6111

O'CONNOR & CO., INC.

314 W. Washington St., Suffolk
757-539-0296

SUFFOLK NEWS-HERALD

Your Hometown Newspaper
in Suffolk

CONTRIBUTING

The Blair Bros., Inc. *

Nansemond County Farm Bureau *

Butler Paper *

J. Walter Hosier & Son, Inc.

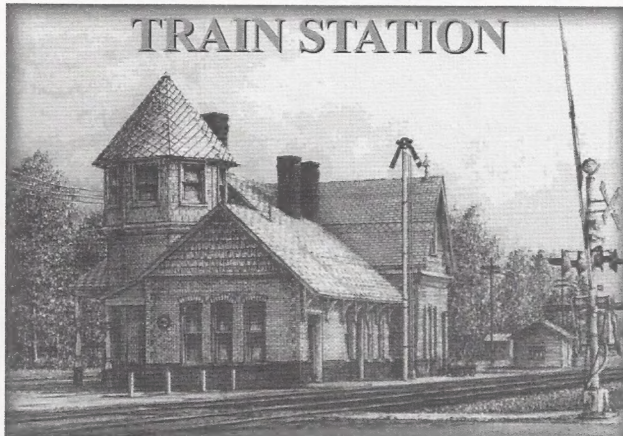
Suffolk Iron Works, Inc.



Phone 757-539-2781 • Email: SNHS@exis.net

A Home for Local History

Sue Woodward, Executive Director
Julie Johnson, Administrative Assistant



Suffolk's Most Recognizable Landmark

Phone: 757-923-4750 Email: trainstation@exis.net
Kristina Prudencio, Train Station Assistant

Gifts and Memorials

To the Dawson House

In Memory of Anna Drewry

- from Scherry & Jeff Johnson
- In Memory of Elizabeth B. Joyner
- from Joyce & Bobby Trump
- from Scherry & Jeff Johnson
- from Sue & Tom Woodward
- In Honor of Henry & Joan Frazier
- from Anonymous

In honor of

- Ms. Ginny Bagnell
 - Mr. Gordon Cox
 - Ms. Mary Hunter Crose
 - Mr. & Mrs. Austin Darden
 - Dr. & Mrs. William Fulgham
 - Mr. & Mrs. John Harrell
 - Dr. & Mrs. Robert Harrell
 - Mr. & Mrs. Ken Lawder
 - Mr. & Mrs. Wayland Pond
 - Mr. & Mrs. Lawrence Smith
 - Mr. & Mrs. Jerry Stone
 - Mrs. Beryl Winslow
- from Nita & Everett Bagnell

To Suffolk-Nansemond Historical Society

In Memory of Elizabeth B. Joyner

- from Ann & Dutch Greene
- In Honor of Nita Bagnell & Mary Lawrence Harrell
- from Anonymous
- In honor of Hubert H. Young, Jr.
- from Anonymous

SNHS Board

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Nancy Webb, Vice Pres.
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Robert Tompert, Asst. Treas.
Kermit Hobbs, Historian

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Karen Hughes
Scherry Johnson
Hunter Odom
Steve Jackson

Christmas Open House at the Train Station November 8, 10:00—4:00

Refreshments and a 10% discount for all shoppers
Nov. 8 only.

Great selection of railroad calendars, including Chessie
75th Anniversary calendars—a cat lover's delight. Get
them while they last.

The only place in Suffolk to buy the Copeland Spoon!

Peanuts, relishes and other goodies for Christmas,
great history books and much, much more!

Crittenden, Eclipse & Hobson Heritage Foundation presents

Village Heritage Day - November 28, 10:00—4:00

Chowder lunch, storytellers, music, exhibits & more at the
Community Hall, Ebenezer Church and the River Shore.

Taste of Suffolk



The shallop *Explorer* from Deltaville was built of white cedar from the Dismal Swamp. The heart cedar from Gates Custom Milling was salvaged from hurricane (Isobel) damaged timber. Nancy Tuck of Gates Milling says that removing the damaged trees reduces the risk of forest fires and provides a clean slate for new white cedar to grow, plus providing the perfect material for boat building—a win-win situation.

Our sincere thanks to the *Explorer* crew and the Deltaville Maritime Museum, the village representatives, our SNHS students and other members who helped, especially Ruth Bitting of 220 Carriage House B&B.



Clockwise from far left: Festival guests become Explorer crew members rowing on the Nansemond River; Tim & Marie Bentley; SNHS students Ben Willis, Ashley Anderson, Cole Barclay, Cody Smith, sponsor Kay Goldberg, Emma Salmon & Lauren Gersbach; Clea Norcross & Judge William Wellington Jones. Pictures thanks to John Johnson and Miley Walker.



SUFFOLK NANSEMOND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P. O. Box 1255

Suffolk, Virginia 23439-1255

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Dates to Remember

- **November 8**—Train Station Gift Shop Christmas Open House
- **November 28**—Crittenden, Eclipse & Hobson Heritage Day
- **December 6 & 7**—32nd Annual SNHS Candlelight Tour